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Chemist honored by American Chemical Society

by Ranney Adams, Propulsion Directorate

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — Dr Karl O. Christe has been presented the American Chemical Society's (ACS) 2003 Inorganic Chemistry Award. Christe is a research chemist and Senior Staff Advisor at the Air Force Research Laboratory's Edwards Research Site.

On March 25, 2003, Christe's chemistry award was presented during the ACS's black-tie awards ceremony and banquet dinner. He received it from the ACS's President-elect Charles P. Casey and Mike Willis, who represented the award sponsor, Aldrich Chemical Co., Inc. The dinner was part of the 225th ACS National Meeting held at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, La.

ACS awards are designed to recognize individual accomplishments in diverse fields of chemistry. They are renowned throughout the scientific world. A major address on Christe's research was presented to the ACS Inorganic Chemistry Division at the meeting. Aldrich Chemical Co., Inc. has sponsored the ACS Inorganic Chemistry Award since 1998.

Christe was nominated for the award based on his lifetime achievements in chemistry.

Described as a trailblazer, Christe has been often cited in inorganic chemistry textbooks for his synthesis and characterization of numerous novel halogen fluorides and the development of the first quantitative scales for oxidizer strength and Lewis acidity. Using his experimental skills combined with theoretical predictions, his career has been based on striving for spectacular breakthroughs rather than small incremental improvements. He has earned a reputation for finding answers to chemical problems declared unsolvable by others. He has published more than 300 peer-reviewed papers and holds more than 60 patents, and his efforts continue to advance the world of chemistry. The application of these efforts will also provide advanced rocket propellants and energetic materials for the future.

Christe's scientific efforts exemplify the long-term philosophy of the laboratory's leadership. According to Maj. Gen Paul D. Nielsen, AFRL Commander, "Some research efforts take more than a decade to show results. I think our programs are well balanced between near-term and far-term research. We provide products to the warfighter every year, so they understand our work and know we are doing our job. We also have to invest in the systems that will come out in 2020 and 2030."

Christe was born in Ulm, Germany, and earned his undergraduate and doctorate degrees from the Technical University of Stuttgart. He immigrated to the United States in 1962, and has had a successful career in defense-oriented research, industry and academia. @